

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 7, 2014

The Honorable Tom Wheeler  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Southwest  
Washington, D.C. 20554

1079

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

Broadband Internet access has become an essential part of the economic and social fabric in many rural communities, as a tool to build businesses, apply for jobs, enhance educational opportunities, and connect to friends and relatives. While our nation has made great strides in expanding broadband infrastructure, one-third of rural Americans still do not have home access to broadband Internet. This not only affects our constituents seeking a job or starting their own business, but also students that are looking to get ahead in their education and patients using tele-health services.

Phase II of the Connect America Fund (“CAF II”) offers an opportunity to bring broadband connections to millions of Americans in rural communities – including many throughout Wisconsin - who wouldn’t otherwise benefit from this access. CAF II also represents the final phase of Universal Service reform for many rural areas, and its rules will effectively determine, for years to come, the level of rural connectivity and the quality of broadband access. This includes the ambitious goal of more than doubling promised download speeds from 4 Mbps to 10 Mbps.

If the Commission advances new requirements without allowing the appropriate level of flexibility in other elements of CAF II, however, it may fall short of the program’s overall mission. First, the CAF II funding period should be extended from the current 5 years to 10 years to allow adequate time for the construction of the higher-capacity network. Next, the Commission should use the same 10 Mbps standard when identifying broadband availability from competitors, or else communities with just 4 Mbps will be left behind. Finally, providers should be given flexibility to substitute high cost locations with unserved locations in partially served areas, to better reach as many people as possible within CAF’s limited funding framework.

Access to broadband Internet service is no longer a luxury for rural America – it is a necessity. Despite years of federal efforts to overcome the digital divide, more work needs to be done. These policy reforms to CAF II will help achieve this goal and will maximize CAF II funding.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you to increase broadband access in rural America. We ask that you provide a response with your views on these proposals by October 22<sup>nd</sup>.

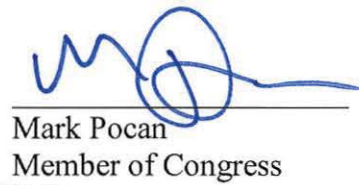
Sincerely,



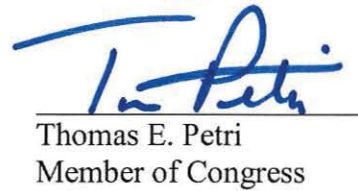
Sean P. Duffy  
Member of Congress



Reid J. Ribble  
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



Thomas E. Petri  
Member of Congress



Ron Kind  
Member of Congress



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

October 24, 2014

The Honorable Sean Duffy  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1208 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Duffy:

Thank you for your letter regarding the implementation of certain aspects of Phase II of the Connect America Fund (CAF II). In your letter, you express concerns that the overall mission of the CAF II program may fall short if the Commission increases the current broadband speed benchmark for program recipients to 10 Mbps downstream /1 Mbps upstream without allowing flexibility in other elements of program, and suggest several proposals to provide such flexibility. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

The universal service program is one of the most important tools at our disposal to ensure that consumers and businesses in rural America have the same opportunities as their urban and suburban counterparts to be active participants in the United States of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We are focused on updating the universal service high-cost program to ensure that we are delivering the best possible voice and broadband experiences to rural areas of states within the confines of our Connect America budget, while providing increased certainty and predictability for all carriers and a climate for increased broadband expansion.

In April, the Commission adopted a *Connect America Fund Phase II Report and Order* to move forward with Phase II of the Connect America Fund for price-cap carriers. In addition, in an associated *Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM)*, the Commission sought comment on a number of the issues you raise, including revising the current broadband performance obligations to require minimum speeds of 10 Mbps downstream, and applying the same performance obligations to all recipients of Phase II support and to rate-of-return carriers. In addition, the *FNPRM* seeks comment on the approaches that you raise in your letter – including lengthening the term of support, using the new speed standard to determine whether an area is served, and allowing CAF II recipients to substitute locations in partially served census blocks for locations in the unserved census block for which it received support. As you suggest, these proposals would allow CAF II recipients more flexibility in meeting their performance obligations. We must consider these proposals in the contexts of our other policy goals, such as encouraging competition and private investment, to ensure that we are fulfilling our universal service mandate.

We have a robust record on these topics and the Commission's staff is giving these issues all due consideration. I welcome a dialogue with stakeholders as to how best to accomplish our

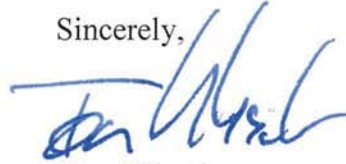


Page 2—The Honorable Sean Duffy

shared objectives, and I look forward to working with you as we continue reforming and modernizing the Universal Service Fund high-cost program – as well as other components of the Fund – to ensure that all Americans have access to robust voice and broadband services.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

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Tom Wheeler



OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

October 24, 2014

The Honorable Reid Ribble  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1513 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Ribble:

Thank you for your letter regarding the implementation of certain aspects of Phase II of the Connect America Fund (CAF II). In your letter, you express concerns that the overall mission of the CAF II program may fall short if the Commission increases the current broadband speed benchmark for program recipients to 10 Mbps downstream /1 Mbps upstream without allowing flexibility in other elements of program, and suggest several proposals to provide such flexibility. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

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shared objectives, and I look forward to working with you as we continue reforming and modernizing the universal service fund high-cost program – as well as other components of the Universal Service Fund – to ensure that all Americans have access to robust voice and broadband services.

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Tom Wheeler





OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

October 24, 2014

The Honorable Mark Pocan  
U.S. House of Representatives  
313 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Pocan:

Thank you for your letter regarding the implementation of certain aspects of Phase II of the Connect America Fund (CAF II). In your letter, you express concerns that the overall mission of the CAF II program may fall short if the Commission increases the current broadband speed benchmark for program recipients to 10 Mbps downstream /1 Mbps upstream without allowing flexibility in other elements of program, and suggest several proposals to provide such flexibility. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

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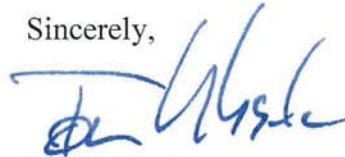
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
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October 24, 2014

The Honorable Tom Petri  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2462 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Petri:

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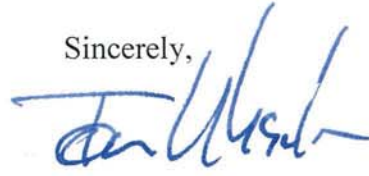
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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
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October 24, 2014

The Honorable Ron Kind  
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